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BURNING QUESTIONS OF THE DAY.

Treated for Modern Thinkers.

BY

LUDWIG VON GERDTELL.

No. 2.

Have we Satisfactory Evidence of  
the New Testament Miracles?

Translated from the German by SAMUEL HINDS WILKINSON, F.R.G.S.;

revised by E. K. SIMPSON, M.A.

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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MR. LUDWIG VON GERDTELL is a living German theologian of considerable Academic attainment. This brochure is No. 2 of a series, the object of which is to meet Scientific unbelief on Scientific ground. Of the merits of the treatise here presented to the public I need not speak; none, I believe, who possess minds both trained and candid, will fail to see the cogency, if not to recognise the convicting power, of the arguments used. The effort, in a life absorbed by many duties, to suitably translate and to secure efficient revision, has succeeded only at the cost of innumerable delays, but I venture to think that we have presented the learned Author's defence of the historicity of the New Testament miracles in such a form as that we may confidently invite the attention of the intelligent of every shade of opinion—Jew, Agnostic, Christian and Rationalist—to his treatment of a really vital subject.

SAMUEL HINDS WILKINSON.

*Brentwood, Essex.*

Christmas, 1907.







HERE is the dictum of Modern Theology :  
"Apply criticism to the Gospel narratives :  
educe thereby a Jesus without miracles : and  
the whole world of culture will adore him."

It sounds plausible, but it is a promise which cannot be performed. *For the Gospel of the Apostles is wedded with its characteristic standpoint and its miracles.* They are historically indivisible. The Gospel of the Apostles is a monument of history that defies all attempts at modernisation or reconstruction. You must accept it or reject it in its entirety. No impartial student can eliminate from this integral whole the miracles or treat the viewpoint of Jesus as superseded, whilst placing his person in the foreground.

For, once again, the whole historical picture and the whole outline of the life of Jesus is bound up with miracle. The miraculous is in organic unity with him. Indeed, by psychological law, his whole mental penetration into the future and the thoughts of others, was nothing else than a miracle. Attempt the critical process of weeding out the "tares" of miracles from the life of Jesus, and you will find yourself logically compelled to root up also the wheat of his words as well. *If consistent, you will be driven to abandon the whole of his life-history.*

The Gospel Records confront us with this issue : If the miracles really happened, then the gospels are authentic documents of an *objective Divine Revelation*. Are the miracles *legendary* only, then the Gospels themselves are *Apocrypha* of *dubious* historical value. In the latter case



the real Jesus is so shrouded in a mantle of myth that even the eye of the critic cannot any longer discern his true figure beneath its fantastic draperies. The cloud of myth has for ever intercepted him from our gaze. Therefore either both Jesus **and** his miracles are historical **reality** or **both** are **myth**. Of course, beneath this myth there may be a kernel of truth. But then we have no historical data to enable us to detect how much is historically trustworthy.

Modern Theology is based on an arbitrary treatment of historical science. It is also an abuse of *religious philosophy*.

For it accepts on the one hand the proposition that God has somehow given us a revelation in Jesus, and on the other hand it rejects his miracles. Fundamentally, this is an indefensible position. In plain terms, it amounts to this : God has vouchsafed to mankind a revelation in Jesus. But he has unhappily entrusted the revelation to fanatics, who in their pious but uncritical enthusiasm immediately falsified its main contents by the addition of mythical miracles. And now, no one can arrive at any certain knowledge as to the true character and original purport of the Revelation, since the historical documents which transmit it are of extremely doubtful worth. God's revelation has revealed nothing, because it was lost again immediately after its receipt, for lack of satisfactory historical corroboration. God has taken away from man, as it were, with his left hand what he had just given to him with his right.

The fundamental thesis of "Modern" Theology if it be pursued thoroughly and calmly to its logical conclusion, virtually casts scorn on God. If God has really vouchsafed to mankind an objective revelation, then he has surely given us historically trustworthy evidence and witnesses of the same. We have, therefore, to choose once more between two alternatives : either revelation *and* miracle—or **neither** revelation **nor** miracle.

In the midst of the prevalent theological haziness of our day, we can hardly formulate this fundamental issue in too sharp or clear terms. The sceptical theological



Vandal possesses neither the humility of faith nor the courage of infidelity. In a spirit of compromise he is therefore always busied, from fear of consequences, in doing his best by well meant attempts to weaken the force of the true issue. But neither the truth nor either party is served by this.

We have really the choice of only one of two positions : either the New Testament together with its miracles is a collection of historically *reliable* documents comprising a Divine Revelation : or it is a *series of fables*, to which we must affix the title "Truth blended with Fiction."

If the miracles of primitive Christianity were historical *reality*, then the Apostolic Gospel is the greatest fact of human history. The Gospel story remains still, in that case, the most important concern even of the man of our day, and would even remain his most momentous concern, if nobody had ever believed in it, indeed if everyone in the twentieth century had unanimously pronounced against it.

Contrariwise, if the miracles are *legends*, then the Gospel both in its own apostolic age and in any other would be the greatest fraud in human history, and would abide so, even if everyone in every age had devoutly believed it.

*The decision between the one position or the other depends upon our attitude to the historical reality and the philosophical possibility of the miracles of the Apostolic age.*

The question of miracle is on this account one of the peculiarly vital questions of Apostolic Christianity. We who stand wholeheartedly by that position, either on the one side or the other, are not going to be beguiled from this positive (and the only warrantable) position by the tactics of compromisers and trimmers.

David Friedrich Strauss, that very astute and determined atheist, rightly said : " In order to rid the Church of parsons, we must first *rid religion of miracles*."

Modern Theology gives full scope to the genius of the learned despoiler, but not to the inexorable decision one way or the other demanded by historic and philosophic fact. *This compels rather to a definite decision.*

We can now commence the actual debate with the opponents of the Gospel.

Uhlhorn is substantially right when he says, "All the reasons adduced against the occurrence of miracles may be resolved into two classes, *historical* and *philosophic*." Thus we are flatly told : the actual occurrence of miracles is not capable of *historical* proof ; and again, it is irreconcilable with *reason* or *common sense*. Both arguments mutually tend to support one another, and one is embarrassed as to how to attack the question. If one attempts to establish miracles historically, the objection starts up : "All accounts of miraculous happenings are *a priori* incredible, for miracles are *unthinkable*." If we approach the subject from the other end and seek the justification of miracles in abstract reasoning, as *an intelligent proposition*, then the objection is : "How does that mend the matter ? Miracles may doubtless be conceivable, but their actual occurrence is not *accredited*, not *historically* established." But as we must begin somewhere, we will begin with the *historical* investigation of the reality of the miracles of the Apostolic Age.

In this tractate we deal therefore exclusively with the objection : "*The Miracles of Primitive Christianity have no satisfactory evidence of a scientifically historical character.*"

Opponents are accustomed to emphasise the necessity of approaching the miracles of the New Testament "*without prepossession*," whereby they generally convey that one must come with the philosophic conviction that miracles are absolutely impossible. It is important that our opponent should, here at least, be honest enough candidly to admit himself lacking in the quality of judicial dispassionateness. Such an opponent is, by reason of his dogmatic prepossession, incapable of a calm, precise examination of the historical evidence of miracles. We are not called upon as accurate historical investigators to determine what is philosophically possible or impossible.

The dictum "Physics, beware of metaphysics," applies also to the modern science of history. We propose, therefore, to separate our *historical* inquiry absolutely and fundamentally from the *philosophical*.



We have simply to examine the credibility of the historical documents, and upon that examination to establish historical facts. To be historically "without partizanship," means that no preconceived theories, no religious or anti-religious preconceptions, but only the historically good or bad evidence of a historical fact are permitted to weigh with the critic in forming his conclusion with regard to it. We will approach then the miracles of the Apostolic Age with the same unbiassed mind as if we were dealing with the Crucifixion of Jesus or the Missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul.

And firstly, we must find common ground with our opponents, as an admitted basis of argument. No matter how small this common ground may be, it must be as solid to the atheist as to us. *We must, therefore, base our enquiry upon those portions of the New Testament only, the genuineness of which is admitted by the extreme school of Biblical criticism.*

Criticism, even in those days when it carried negation to the furthest point, admitted the *genuineness* of four New Testament Epistles. These are four Epistles, pregnant with weighty matters, which the greatest of the Apostles of Jesus, Paul, addressed to the primitive communities in *Corinth*, *Galatia* and *Rome*. Even the atheist David Friedrich *Strauss* and his teacher, the great critic Ferdinand Conrad *Baur*, whose radical standpoint is universally known, did not call their genuineness in question. *Baur* attacked on critical grounds only the last two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Let us, therefore, to be on perfectly sure ground, dispense with these also for the purpose of our enquiry.

We must not conceal the fact that "critics" of the Dutch School have endeavoured to cast doubt even on this slender remainder of the New Testament, though without any success. A leading figure in the German critical world, *Adolf Harnack*, describes their attack as "simply incomprehensible."<sup>1</sup>

And one of the most prominent as well as the most radical of living German critics, the brilliant Professor

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<sup>1</sup> *Einfach unfassbar.*

Wrede, an avowed unbeliever, writes in his "Paulus" p. 2, "The opinion which has been disseminated in Holland and adopted here and there in Germany, that the whole of Paul's Epistles belonged to a later time, we can regard only as *a serious blunder of criticism*. Epistles such as those of First Thessalonians, Galatians, the Second Corinthians, point in hundreds of details and allusions unmistakably to conditions that are only conceivable within the first few decades after the death of Jesus. The forger is yet unborn who is capable of devising such purposeless, individual, purely personal and spontaneously arising utterances as are here found in abundance, and who could into the bargain produce the delusion in all the epistles that but one original, marked personality was their author."

We assume, therefore, for the present, that the Evangelists have no historical value whatever, that they are no better than myth. But the whole of German criticism, even where its tendencies are most radical, is still agreed as to the genuineness of the above-named four epistles of Paul.

**We have, therefore, found the common ground we sought, in the two Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans (the two last chapters of the last named excepted).**

In the first instance we will deal with our opponents on this basis alone. We will draw all our *decisive* arguments solely from these four epistles, and only cite the other New Testament Scriptures conditionally and incidentally.

We have still to agree with our opponents as to *the time of the composition of these letters*. There is no serious disagreement between the two parties in this respect. We join hands with the declaration of our antagonists, say Adolf Harnack, in assigning a date of origin for these letters.

This thorough-going Critic in his comprehensive and learned work, "The Chronology of ancient Christian Literature to Eusebius,"<sup>1</sup> I., pp. 236, 237, 717, fixes the events under consideration as follows :—

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius.*



The Crucifixion of Jesus, 30 A.D.

The Composition of both letters to the Corinthians and that to the Galatians, 53 A.D.

The Composition of the Epistle to the Romans, 53, 54, A.D.

According, therefore, to the statement of our opponents, twenty-three to twenty-four years elapsed between the Crucifixion of the Master and the inditing of these letters by his most gifted Apostle. They provide us, therefore, with a distinct historical picture of the beliefs of the Primitive Christian Communities concerning their Master during the first two decades after the death of Jesus.

And what do these four Epistles say about miracles? In the first place they report nothing of miracles performed by *Jesus himself*. Provisionally, therefore, this class of miracles may be questioned. *But no one with these documents before him can doubt that in them Paul advances the claim to have wrought miracles himself.*

Let us commence with *Second Corinthians*.

This Epistle is recognised by all the "Critics," judged by its local colour, style and tone, and in fine by the whole historical setting, to be unique, unforgeable and inimitable.

We require first and briefly, to become acquainted with the historical background out of which the Epistle arose.

According to all Paul's Epistles, he had to contend in the communities he founded with a *Counter Mission*, possessing a definite and Pharisaic aim. Judaising emissaries, while acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, followed Paul with inflammatory speeches (*cf.* Gal. i. 6, 7).<sup>1</sup> They were Church members (*cf.* for instance, Gal. ii., 4, 5; 2 Cor. xi., 22, 23), and endeavoured to get the control of the Churches into their own hands.

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<sup>1</sup> In the original the learned author here recommends his readers to use for the purposes of reference, not the Luther Bible, often inexact, but such translations as those of Kautsch or Weiszäcker, or the New Testament of H. Wiese, or again, the "Elberfelder Bibel." May the translator venture to recommend to English readers the use for the same purposes, not only of the Revised Version, but also of Weymouth's "New Testament in Modern Speech?"—Trans.

According to *2nd Corinthians* the collision between Paul and these Judaisers was sharpest and most personal at Corinth. The Judaisers, in order to cripple the influence of the Apostle in the Church at Corinth, had assailed him with the most abject calumnies. They had cast doubts upon his personal reliability and integrity (*cf.* 2 Cor. i. 12, i. 17, ii. 17). They reproached him with a lust for spiritual domination (2 Cor. i. 24), even with the falsification of the Gospel (2 Cor. ii. 17). They described him as an ambitious, carnally minded braggart (2 Cor. iii. 1, v. 12, x. 1, 2) of no spiritual importance. He had displayed sordid-mindedness in money matters (2 Cor. xi. 12 ; xii, 14, 16, 17). They attributed his meeting with the Risen Christ, in all probability, to a fit of mental aberration (2 Cor. v. 13). *And finally all their charges culminated in the allegation that Paul had forced his way to a level with the original Apostles, and had arrogated to himself Apostolic rank by an act of self-assumption.*

Strangely enough, the Church had not shut the mouth of these heretics. On the contrary, it had given ear to their libels. It had become suspicious of Paul and had openly refused him obedience (2 Cor. x. 6., xiii. 10). It had been so incited against him that it began to want a *practical proof of the fact that Christ really spoke by Paul's lips* (2 Cor. xiii. 3). In other words, the Church had come to doubt whether Paul was a genuine and accredited Apostle, in the same way as were the original Apostles who had "companied" with Jesus.

And how does the Apostle combat and conquer these dangerous attacks and calumniation? Answer: **He appeals for the confirmation of his Divine Mission simply and solely to the miracles which he had performed in Corinth before their own eyes.**

He writes thus in 2 Cor. xii. 11-13, "I ought to have been commended of you (in the face of the heretical attacks against my person and Apostolic mission),<sup>1</sup> **for in nothing am I behind** (when I was with you) *the very chiefest Apostles* (according to Gal. ii. 9, the 'pillars,' Peter, James and John, are here meant), though I (before God) be nothing. Truly, **the signs of an Apostle** were

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<sup>1</sup> Author's comment.



wrought **among you** in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.”

Obviously, therefore, the Church at Corinth had been an *eye-witness* of these miracles of the Apostle Paul. In 1 Cor. ii. 3-5 he recalls that time to their memory, “And I was with you (when, in the year 49, in Corinth, I proclaimed Jesus to you for the first time, and you came to believe)<sup>1</sup> in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but **in demonstration of the Spirit and power**, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the **power of God**.”

It was not the transporting eloquence of the Apostle Paul, then, which had made these members of the Church disciples of Jesus. Not even the mighty burden of his message, nor the moral purity of his holy character merely, but both only in conjunction with *the fact of his miracles* had brought them to complete conviction of the truth of the Gospel.

And only *four* years had elapsed between the miraculous deeds of the Apostle and his present written appeal to them. The members of the Church at Corinth must, therefore, have been able to recall clearly to mind the previous miracles of the Apostle, when Paul wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. *Occurrences of that kind are not forgotten in four years.* Besides, these miracles had left a deep impress in the external life of the members of the community. The miracles had been factors in their conversion. And their conversion had brought on them lasting social inconveniences. The converts had, for instance, to justify themselves before their heathen relations regarding their baptism. Thereupon Paul’s miracles must have repeatedly been subjects of discussion. In the dark hours of isolation, when, under the pressure of general opposition, the believers were tempted to doubt the truth of the Gospel, they would be sustained afresh by the memory of them. Again, after *only four years* there must have been many members living in the community who had been themselves sub-

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s comment.

jects of the former miracles of the Apostle. In the Primitive Church each member was a missionary. These had assuredly borne public witness from time to time during four years of the miracles by which they had been healed. So throughout the whole four years the Church would have been constantly reminded of these miracles. They were landmarks in their inward and outward life.

*When the Apostle wrote his two letters to Corinth, the wonders he had previously wrought were, at any rate, a generally recognised fact in the community.* Otherwise Paul could never have so naïvely adduced them as proofs of his *Divine Mission* to a Church that had, in the meantime, grown *critical*. Had the former miracles of the Apostle been fanatical self-deception, on Paul's part, the Judaisers would have at once remarked it. They were accustomed to place each utterance of his beneath the magnifying lens of their hatred. They were, moreover, in the highest degree, interested in ruining Paul. At that time it was still an easy matter for them to establish the question of fact. The miracles of the Apostle had not taken place in secret séances, to which only the initiated were admitted. They had been wrought under the inspection of the public. The local synagogue must have known of these occurrences as well as the assembly of believers. The Judaisers stood as near to the Synagogue as to the Church. A simple inquiry, a brief hearing of witnesses, would have been sufficient for their purpose, in order to have disgraced Paul for ever in the assembly, had his miracles been mere imagination. In any case Paul would have received a sharp censure from these Judaisers. Why did the Judaisers not inflict it? There is only one possible answer: *The Apostle's miracles were too notorious at Corinth for any contesting of them to have a prospect of success.*

Let us consider the whole case as calmly and coolly as possible.

If the Apostle's conviction that he had wrought miracles in Corinth was self-deception, then Paul was either a *visionary* or an *impostor*. In fact, we are shut up to the latter. *A severe moral stigma rests upon him, at any rate.*

Please observe that we have here to do with miracles



which *Paul* claims to have wrought **himself**. "It is one thing to accept, without scrutiny, *other people's* miracles, and quite another solemnly to base one's claim to a Divine Mission upon **one's own** miracles." The latter, in the event of the miracles never having really taken place, is the mark of a great lack of correct self-estimation. *It would indeed be a revolting self-assumption which would degrade Paul to the level of a despicable charlatan. In that event Paul would have actually been the ambitious and untrustworthy braggart which the Judaisers represented him to be.*

It is a paltry evasion merely to say, "Paul just deceived himself." We know him, from his letters, to have been a practical, sincere and unassuming man. He exhibited these virtues in his life as did hardly anybody else but the Master himself. He was, moreover, an enemy of all pretension, a clear, cool-headed man, versed in the keenest dialectics.

*Finally, he was a master of psychological self-analysis, who passed judgment on himself with scrupulous accuracy.* Natures such as Paul's are not accustomed to deceive themselves in so gross a fashion. If Paul really did not do the miracles, he was an impostor. In that case he has fatally committed himself, not only before the Judaisers and the Corinthian Church of his own time, but at the bar of all subsequent generations.

But our adversaries resort to another shift. "Paul," they say, "writes in 2 Cor. xii. 12, only of signs and wonders *in general* as wrought by himself in Corinth. He mentions no *specific* miracle. He does not affirm that he raised anyone from the dead. Nothing in this passage obliges us to think of miracles in the strictest sense of the word. Without doubt, Paul possessed *special* gifts for Evangelistic and Pastoral work. He rightly attributed their origin to God. We may therefore regard his 'signs and wonders,' very simply, as having been his great religious successes in Corinth, corresponding to the measure of his exceptional spiritual equipment." To this we reply "Paul was a *Jew*. His opponents the Judaisers, too, were *Jews*. Jews of that day used to know their Bibles. 'Signs and wonders' was an *established technical*

*expression in the Jewish Bible.* It uses this expression, Deuteronomy xxxiv. 10-12, to describe the *notorious, unambiguous* miracles by which God had once accredited his servant *Moses*. When Paul lays down that *the* signs and wonders *of* an Apostle had been accomplished among them, both he and the Judaisers, as Jews, can have thought of nothing else but *the miracles of revelation in the strictest sense of the word.* By the use of this technical Biblical expression, Paul clearly places himself on the same footing with Moses and his miracles. He expects to be accredited with the community of the Judaisers by virtue of his own miracles as the messenger of God, just as Moses was accredited with Israelites and Egyptians. A Jew of that era could understand absolutely nothing else by "Signs and wonders" (*cf.* Acts vii. 36)<sup>1</sup>. The modern dress of this objection of our opponents is unmistakably discernible.

We can, therefore, proceed in our inquiry.

The witness of the *first Epistle to the Corinthians* and the *Epistle to the Galatians* is perhaps even more clearly favourable to the miracles of the Apostolic age.

When Paul wrote these two epistles in 53 A.D., miracles were still prevalent in both communities. *He speaks of them as of something that was well known to and recognised by both parties.*

In three chapters of the *first Epistle to the Corinthians* (xii.-xiv.), he lays down detailed regulations concerning these miracles.

In the *Epistle to the Galatians* he appeals to those miracles which were still being performed in the community at the time he composed his letter, in demonstration of the authenticity of his Gospel. In Galatians iii. 5,

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<sup>1</sup> The whole of the rest of the New Testament always understands by the expression "Signs and wonders," *definite miracles in the strictest sense of the word* (Matt. xxiv. 24, Acts ii. 19, 20). The same expression is used in the whole of the New Testament to describe the miracles of Jesus (John iv. 48, Acts ii. 22). And the Acts of the Apostles leaves no room for doubt that the "signs and wonders" of the Apostles were of the very same status as the miracles of Jesus (Acts iv. 30, 31 ; v. 12-16).

we read, "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit and **worketh miracles** among you, doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?"<sup>1</sup>

Let us briefly summarise our argument so far. Four documents in the New Testament are admitted by the most learned, acute and malevolent opponents of the Gospel in any age, to be directly Apostolic. They are incidental letters written without any designing purpose for the occasion, as the occasion arose. And the witness of at least three of these documents is unanimously and overwhelmingly in favour of miracles. These letters were written in two cases whilst the miracles were still in progress, and in the third case very soon after their occurrence.

Finally, these miracles were performed under conditions such that, if spurious, the fact must have been discovered.

The well-known hypothesis, which our gainsayers have with so much adroitness and show of success sought to apply to the Gospel miracles, viz., that they are legendary and mythical, breaks down completely with this class of miracles. The miracles of the Apostles were not first recorded after a long period of oral communication—in fine, at third or fourth hand, but the **miracle-worker himself** registered them in writing, either during or immediately after their occurrence. *And the man who records them was one of the purest moral characters in the history of the world.*

**No historical event whatever can be more signally attested than the miracles of the Apostle Paul.** They possess the highest degree of certainty to which historical science can attain.

The four principal Pauline Epistles further prove that not only Paul but *the whole* of the Apostles claimed to be

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<sup>1</sup> In Romans xv. 18, 19, Paul says that Christ worked by him, "in word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God." We cite this passage for the benefit of the many critics who hold the genuineness of the last two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. But we do not lay any decisive stress on it.



workers of miracles. Paul writes on this head in 2 Cor. xii. 11 and 12, "*In nothing* am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly, **the signs of** an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

The Judaisers had played off the first Apostles *against* Paul, as being the *true and genuine Apostles*. "Paul," they said, "never lived with the Lord, therefore he is not an Apostle at all."

To this Paul replies, "I have, however, wrought among you **the signs of** an Apostle in *signs and wonders and mighty deeds*."

From the clause "of an Apostle" it may be seen that the Primitive Church let no one rank as an Apostle whom God had not accredited by the working of miracles.

Further, if Paul had been the *only* one in the Apostolic band who claimed to work miracles, then *he* would indeed have been the "chief Apostle." In that case the Judaisers would have found it impossible to represent the first apostles as the only true apostles in contrast to Paul.

Paul must have known if the first Apostles were held to have performed miracles. We can prove that from the four great Epistles before us. According to them Paul met Peter *at least three times*. In Gal. i. 18-20 he relates the matter as follows: "Then after three years (A.D. 33 according to Harnack's reckoning) I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him *fifteen* days. But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold before God, I lie not." Here Paul assures us *under oath* that three years after his conversion he lodged with Peter for half a month at Jerusalem. We may be sure that these two great World-reformers would not spend that time in chatting about the weather or the new Roman circus at Cæsarea, but would speak of the mighty acts of God. In the year 33 Peter was right in the heart of the great Revival at Jerusalem of which we are told in the Acts of the Apostles. If Paul spontaneously

remained for fifteen days in the household of Peter at this unique juncture, he must certainly have known whether Peter claimed to have worked miracles. Besides this, Paul met Peter on two further occasions in Jerusalem and Antioch for important interviews (*cf.* Gal. ii. 1-14). Paul and Peter had, therefore, come into touch with each other, and were sufficiently informed about each other.

*It is therefore historically demonstrable that all the Apostles of Jesus Christ affirmed themselves to be workers of miracles.*

This apostolic claim compels us to face the alternative; if the claim tallied with the truth, then the Apostles were *real* messengers of the living God to mankind. In the other case they were arrogant *teachers of error*, and deserve no confidence whatever. (1)

Again, historical proof of the Physical Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the Central Miracle of the Apostolic Gospel, can be as clearly furnished as in the case of the miracles of the Apostles.

Dr. Torrey hits the nail on the head when he says : "The Resurrection of Jesus is, in more than one respect, the most important fact of history. *By it the victory of faith and the defeat of unbelief are determined.* If it can be proved with historical certainty that Jesus rose from the dead, then the Gospel rests upon an impregnable basis. Every *essential* doctrine of the Gospel is included in the Resurrection. They stand or fall with it. Thoughtful doubters and unbelievers are conscious of this. An eminent sceptic put this into words recently, saying that it was a useless waste of time to discuss the possibility of the other miracles. The vital question is this : did Jesus rise from the dead? If so, then it is easy to believe in the other miracles. If not, then the other miracles fall through also."

This miracle, therefore, constitutes the crucial question of Apostolic Christianity. We adduce the following eight reasons for the Resurrection of Jesus :—

1. *It is verified by a sufficient number of witnesses.*

Firstly, it is *unequivocally* attested by the **Apostle Paul** in *each* of his four principal epistles, the genuineness of

which is recognised. He refers to it in *Romans*, i. 4; iv. 24, 25; vi. 4, 5; vii. 4; viii. 11; viii. 34; x. 9; xiv. 9; also in *1 Cor.* vi. 14 and **xv. 1-58**; further in *2 Cor.* iv. 14; v. 15; finally in *Gal.* i. 1. The most important of all these passages is *1 Cor.* xv. 3-9. There Paul writes: "For I delivered unto you *among the chief doctrines* (*ἐν πρώτοις*) that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried and that he *rose again the third day*, and that he was seen of *Cephas* (Peter), then of the *twelve* (the Apostles including Peter). *After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present* (i.e. are still alive), but some are fallen asleep (i.e. are already dead). After that he was seen of *James*, then of *all the Apostles*. And last of all, he was seen of *me* also, as of one born out of due time."

Here Paul cites at least 514 witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus. Amongst them are found **the whole of the Primitive Apostles**.

*It is one of the most certain facts of history that not only Paul, but all the first Apostles, were firmly convinced that they had seen Jesus after his Crucifixion, as one who had risen from the dead.* We adduce the following reasons for this contention:—

(a) Paul asseverates in his first letter to the Corinthians (xv. 3), the fact that he only delivers to the Church that which he has personally heard in the Apostolic circle, concerning the appearances of the Risen Christ. "For I delivered unto you among the chiefest things, that which also I **received**." We have already shown it to be demonstrable that Paul and the first Apostles came into intimate personal contact with one another. Paul confessed that he had been converted through an appearance of Jesus (*Gal.* i. 11-16). His conversion caused at the time the greatest sensation among Jews and Christians. When, three years later, Paul lodged for half a month with Peter at Jerusalem (*Gal.* i. 18-20), of course the two Apostles would not omit all reference to the conversion of Paul and to its cause, the Resurrection of Jesus. *Paul*



may, indeed he must, have learnt from Peter's own lips, whether Peter and the first Apostles likewise averred that they had seen the Risen One.

(b) The first Apostles had further—if we may use the expression—officially examined and approved the Gospel of the Apostle Paul. On this point Paul writes in Gal. ii. 1, 2: “Then fourteen years after (that is, in 47 A.D. according to Harnack's reckoning), I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation and *laid before them that Gospel which I was preaching among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation*” (viz., Peter, John and James according to Gal. ii. 9). The result was as follows: the first Apostles gave Paul “the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. ii. 9). If it had been Paul *alone* who preached the Resurrection of Jesus, it must have come to light on this occasion; for the Resurrection was among the principal contents of “*his*” Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. xv., 14-19). In that event (*i.e.* if Paul alone had preached the Resurrection), he could not have been recognised by the first Apostles as a brother, nor could he have recognised them as brethren (cf. xv. 34, Gal. i. 8, 9; Romans xvi. 17, 18). If they had not been in unity on this doctrine, he could not have written regarding the Resurrection to the Church at Corinth: “Therefore, whether it were I or they, so **we** preach and so ye believed” (1 Cor. xv. 11). Church history proves that those who proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus and those who deny it cannot labour together as brethren.

(c) All the other New Testament Scriptures represent the first Apostles as united in the faith of the Resurrection of Jesus.

(d) Even the most extreme critics, as, for instance, David Friedrich Strauss, have not ventured to contest this fact. Had any historical possibility whatsoever existed by which it could have been denied, most certainly this materialistic philosopher and astute opponent of the Gospel would have denied it. Strauss, in his “Old and New Faiths”<sup>1</sup> (16th edition, 1904, p. 20), calls the Resurrection of Jesus Christ a “historical fraud.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Alten und Neuen Glauben.*

But nevertheless, in the same chapter he admits the Apostles' "honest conviction that they had really seen and spoken with the Risen One."

For the Resurrection of Jesus we have therefore a large number of witnesses who saw him singly or in company with others, not once but at least six times, at longer or shorter intervals. Some of them, moreover, saw him several times. He was intimately known personally to at least twelve of these witnesses. Even his own brother James was among the witnesses. It could not, therefore, be a question of mistaken personality.

It is, moreover, worthy of note that Paul gives **the precise names** of the authoritative witnesses, and that before a community in which existed a party that **contested** the truth of the witnesses' affirmations (1 Cor. xv. 12). The Primitive Church plainly deemed itself to be the family of God, and thus took up a position in sharp religious contrast to the whole of the rest of mankind. But its members looked on each other (reciprocally) as brothers and sisters. They stood in close, familiar relationship to one another. It would have been easy, therefore, for that party at Corinth which called in question the Resurrection of Jesus to have examined the *bonâ fides* of the Apostle's declarations.

Finally, we must establish the *purport* as well as the *interpretation* of the witnesses' statements. In maintaining the Resurrection of Jesus, these witnesses by no means meant to give expression to a subjective conviction that Jesus, in spite of his crucifixion, was continuing his life as a glorified spirit. Such a proposition would have been nothing extraordinary to the Greeks in the Church at Corinth. For them it would simply have been a religious truism, which no one would have contested, because the ideal Grecian philosophy of Socrates and Plato taught the same doctrine. *It would have been precisely the view which that party in Corinth adopted.* The members of this party, like the whole classical Greek world, had been brought up in a dualistic disdain of the Corporeal. In true Greek fashion they looked upon the body as the prison-house of the soul. Naturally, they

would not deny that Jesus had not remained in a state of death. They believed indubitably that he would live for ever as a glorified spirit. The only offence to their philosophic temper in the declaration of the Apostles was the "sensuous" miracle of the Resurrection, that is to say, the resuscitation of *the corpse* of Jesus. *They represented even then the thesis of Modern Theology as against Paul.* Paul, in contradistinction to these teachers of error, understands by "Resurrection" *the Resuscitation of the body of Jesus*, not simply a kind of visionary spectacle. In 1 Cor. ix. 1, Paul writes: "Am I not an Apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" According to the whole tenor of his letter, Paul represents himself as having seen Jesus in exactly the same way as the first Apostles, that is, *bodily*. With this fact, that he has *seen* Jesus as have the others, he seeks to meet the Judaisers' objections and to prove that he stands on the same level as the first Apostles. Had he only claimed to have seen Jesus in vision, that sight would not have been on a level with the sight of Jesus that the first Apostles enjoyed, who had lived with Jesus. And in that case his consequent argument would have been inadmissible. The realistic view-point of Jesus and his Apostles broke in on the idealism of the classical Greek world at Corinth for the first time. This engendered the heresy in the church at Corinth. The purport of our witnesses' declaration is therefore as follows: Jesus has appeared to the disciples after His death, clothed in His former corporeality.

II. *These witnesses were near enough in point of time to the events to be fully informed of them.*

It was already twenty-three to twenty-four years after the Resurrection when Paul wrote these four chief Epistles. It is the period of time which separates a man's best years from his student days at the university. Indeed, we can subtract four years. Paul writes in 1 Cor. xv. 1, that he had already proclaimed the Resurrection of Jesus to the Corinthians during his first stay at Corinth, that is to say, in 49 A.D. Thus only nineteen years lie between the Resurrection and the testimony



thereto by St. Paul in these letters. We are concerned, therefore, with a space of time not quite so long as that which divides a silver wedding from a marriage. Every mother easily recalls the birth of her first child nineteen years ago. *The Resurrection of Jesus was, however, an event of quite a different kind.* It must have thrilled every fibre in the brain of him who lived to witness it. He who believed it staked his whole existence on it. It caused immense excitement and revolution of thought wherever it was made known. *One favored to experience anything of that kind, would not forget it during his lifetime, much less in nineteen years.* And note that the Apostles proclaimed this event almost daily during all those nineteen years. For it they stood accused at the bar of justice, for it they made manifold journeys. Often did they mention it in their letters and in private conversation. They were obliged to defend it, over and over again, against the objections of unbelievers. Their recollections of it must therefore have been perpetually renewed.

The hypothesis of legend or myth fails to account for the Resurrection. For the occurrence had not to run through a course of oral communication before it was set down on parchment. We receive our knowledge of it, rather, through the direct testimony of the first and best witnesses.

Psychologically we can very well understand the despairing step taken by those Dutch critics who have tried to deny the genuineness of these four Pauline Epistles. A determined enemy of the Gospel who would preserve a scientific character for his unbelief, has—except for the hypothesis of hallucination, which we shall discuss later—really no other expedient.

III. *The character of all these witnesses was unassailable on ethical grounds.*

No honorable opponent of the Gospel has ever denied this. Their moral greatness awakened an Augustine, a Francis of Assisi, and a Luther. They have been the unrivalled patterns of all mature moral manhood for nearly two thousand years.

IV. *It is demonstrable that they had no sort of temporal or personal interest to serve by their contention that Jesus had risen from the dead.*

The Cross of Golgotha stood then, bloodstained and sombre, with terrible vividness immediately before their eyes. It was prophetic, indeed, of what they had to expect for their witness to the Resurrection of Jesus.

Nevertheless, for the sake of their faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, the Apostles submitted for long years to be hounded hither and thither like deer, and finally to be butchered "like sheep for the slaughter" (Romans viii. 35, 36; 2 Cor. xi. 23-33; 1 Cor. iv. 9-13, xv. 30-32). Their persuasion that Jesus had risen from the dead cost them everything which is dear to man; home and comfort, church and creed, livelihood and prospects, friendship and the esteem of their fellow-men. All they gained by the declaration was the approval of their Risen Master. They could not, then, have been impostors.

Neither were they themselves deceived, for

V. *They possessed enough judgment and moral cultivation not to let themselves be imposed upon.*

Let us examine this proposition more in detail.

(a) The theological freethinker contests the Messiahship and Divine Sonship of Jesus. But he is willing to pay homage to Jesus as the greatest reader of men's souls, the greatest Pedagogue and Teacher, who has fathomed beyond any other the heart of men and things. With this latter position we agree. But we deduce from it certain inferences.

Jesus left nothing behind him in writing. He knew, therefore, that his whole fabric would stand or fall with the qualifications of his eleven Apostles. Had Jesus been in truth the great Searcher of men which rationalistic theology would make of him, he would certainly have chosen for the primitive Apostleship men practically qualified both to be witnesses and helpers.

Conversely: If the first Apostles invented the Resurrection of Jesus, then Jesus may have been everything else, but certainly no reader of men. In that case he sought with incomprehensible short-sightedness perhaps the most

incapable and heedless men in Israel as the channels for the conveyance of his Gospel. A scrutiniser of men must surely have scrutinised his own chosen agents.

Further, for years Jesus gave himself, day and night, to the education of the first Apostles for their unique future vocation. He spent the best of his time and his strength upon them. They stood, as did none others after them, under his potent personal and permanent influence. If Jesus really were that tutorial genius of the first rank which our opponents allege, he has exhibited his masterpiece in the training of his disciples for a calling which was to embrace the interests of time and eternity.

On the other hand, if immediately after the death of their Master the Apostles lost their heads and all capacity of sound judgment, so that they could maintain with the utmost zeal to their lives' end that they had not only personally spoken with Jesus after his death, but that they had even eaten and drunk with him, then Jesus might have been all besides, but he was certainly no great student or Teacher of mankind. *In that case, his claim to be the Messiah and Son of God was lamentably exploded on the cross, while his "Resurrection" as lamentably cancels any claim to be a Teacher or Reader of men. His "Resurrection" would then form the amazing confutation of the significance of his personality as a man.* If the Apostles were deceived about the Resurrection of Jesus, the fact of their hallucinations recoils with crushing force upon their Master.

The Apostolic declaration of the Resurrection of Jesus drives us, therefore, to an inevitable conclusion. Either that event is the greatest *fact* in the history of the world, in which case we have in Jesus to do with the Son of God, and in his Apostles with the messengers of the living God. Or else the declaration rested on the *self-deception* of the "Apostles," in which case Jesus was not even a Rabbi of ordinary talents, while his disciples were fanatics, whose weakness of judgment verged on idiocy.

Assuming the latter to be the case—



(b) We put one question to our opponents: How could these half-demented romanticists, in whose morbid brains dream and reality were crudely blended, compose a book from which, as from no second, there streams the spirit of refined taste, ineffaceable originality, and a marvellously perfect morality?

Such a universal genius and man of the world as *Goethe* declared himself, eighteen hundred years later, to be indebted to this Book for his moral education. And one of the greatest observers of human nature and diplomats of all time, Napoleon I., had to confess concerning this Book, that "Christianity has an advantage over all philosophers and diplomatists: *Christians do not deceive themselves about the nature of things*, they cannot be reproached either with the hair-splitting or with the charlatanism of the idealists." The New Testament is indeed not only the profoundest, but *the most practical* book in the world. In all contingencies of daily life it manifests a safe and sober judgment.

From a purely æsthetic point of view the New Testament contains the *most powerful tragedy* in the world's literature.

With the simplest forms of speech this tragedy produces a unique and astonishing impression. The narrative is couched almost in the language of childhood. Even a Papuan lad can comprehend its purport. And yet in all ages it has excited the admiration of the most cultured minds. Thousands of university professors are occupied to-day in probing its depths of meaning. The books written for and against it compose whole libraries. Most remarkable of all, perhaps, is the *fact* that a portion of mankind in every successive age has accepted it as history. Thus it has divided the world. It is the perennial "fountain of youth," unceasingly educing from its mysterious depths new men, new civilisations. It is the anchor-ground of institutions which sway nations and outlast millenniums. The Reformation, turning back to it, grasped it afresh, and thereby shed on the West the dawn of a new day. Historically viewed it is the primordial cell of an endless evolution. The deepest and the

holiest mind among us can scarcely forecast, seer-like, its destiny, far less survey its complete career.

This world-shattering tragedy, we are told, is substantially a fiction, though a fiction with a historical background. It was the "unconscious" creation of the first disciples. In its portrayal the "ideal" Rabbi of Nazareth stood as their model in much the same sense as the historical Odysseus stood to Homer.

Admitting this contention to be true—

Then we must accept its consequences, and say, "*Peter, John and James*, in that case, were men possessing at least the poetical genius of a *Sophocles*, a *Shakespeare*, or a *Goethe*. Indeed, had these three of the greatest poets of the world entered into partnership, their *united* talents would not have sufficed to write the Bible tragedy of Christ."

For, to ask our opponents only one question: How could men devoid of all perception of reality and all sound common sense, produce a fiction which represents the *highest possible standard* of religious and moral culture? *Only by a miracle could they do it, a miracle which would surpass all the Bible miracles for extraordinariness*. As well maintain that an idiot had written Faust, or a cretin produced the "Critique of Pure Reason"!

But if, on the other hand, it be, with us, assumed that the first disciples were workmen under orders, who, without any embellishments of their own minds, told their tale with honest fidelity, then the whole perplexity disappears.

(c) So far as we know the Apostles from the *Gospels* and *their own letters*, they were not morbidly minded mystics.

*John* and *Peter* were horny-handed fishermen who could patch their nets and scrub the decks with their mops. *Matthew* was a *Jewish* tax-collector. *Thomas* was of a sceptical, inexorably matter-of-fact nature (*John* xx. 24, 25). Men of the people, practical men like this, are not likely to follow chimeras. They were not hallucinated nuns, with their nervous systems deranged by

fasts, flagellations and listlessness. All of them were moving in the midst of daily life. Their piety does not wear the hysterical traits of cloistered mysticism. *Paul* was an acute thinker of the stamp and dignity of a Kant or a Hegel, and not a poetical sentimentalist. His letters bear no trace of a tendency towards the invention of fanciful wonders. They make no mention of the miracles of *Jesus*, excepting that of the Resurrection. This literary fact is as surprising as it is characteristic. All the Apostles were aware of the probability of their being put to death if they proclaimed the Resurrection of *Jesus*. But people are only willing to die for a thing of whose reality they have *cautiously* and *thoroughly* convinced themselves. And the Apostles could and must have known whether they had really seen *Jesus* after his death or no.

(d) Our antagonists are accustomed to protest at this point. Say they: "We do not question the Apostles' sincere *subjective* conviction that they really saw *Jesus* after his death as one who had been physically raised again. But the *objective* reality of the Resurrection of *Jesus* is by no means a legitimate inference from that. This subjective fact—fact only as far as the consciousness was concerned—might have originated in the disciples in two ways.

"(1) By a *real, actual* appearance of the Risen One.

"(2) By a simple *hallucination* corresponding with no historical, objective reality.

"The victim of hallucination resembles to a certain extent the healthy *dreamer*. Like the latter, he takes the fantastic creations of his imagination for outward realities. He believes that he sees them in external space. According to our opinion, nothing further than such a hallucination befell the disciples, accounting for the fact so far as their consciousness was concerned."

To this we reply: The victim of hallucination resembles the healthy dreamer in one more respect. The dreamer, namely, awakes after a time. Then he recognises instantaneously that all his fairy world was but a dream. And the deception of the hallucination lasts only



as long as the fit lasts. *When the fit is over the victim becomes suddenly aware that he has been under the nightmare of an illusion.* Our opponents' hypothesis of hallucination could at best only explain the origin of the belief in the Resurrection in the first few days after the crucifixion of Jesus. But the (alleged) overwrought nerves of the disciples must have gradually recovered after the first fright. As soon as they did, the hallucinations would have been exposed. And as soon as the attack was over the Apostles would recognise that they had been but the victims of an illusion. The modern lunacy doctor demands from his convalescent patient, as a voucher for his cure, the recognition of his malady.

Now we are able to prove from the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xv. 1-8) that the primitive community stood, twenty-three years after the Resurrection, steadfastly to their conviction that they had seen Jesus as one risen from the dead.

This fact forces an alternative upon our adversaries.

If in the presence of this conviction lasting for decades our opponents are really satisfied psychologically with the hypothesis of a hallucination, they must then agree that the hallucination lasted till Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, or else that it constantly repeated itself. They must then seriously maintain that at least 514 *people* suffered hallucination uninterruptedly for at least *twenty-three years* by one and the same illusion. This Primitive Church which has hovered before succeeding generations as a religious model must in that case have consisted almost altogether of *chronic lunatics*.

Our opponents will, therefore, hardly blame us if, in view of these circumstances, we hold to the other possible explanation. We affirm, then, that the faith of the first disciples in the Resurrection arose from actual and objective appearances of the Crucified.

If these 514 witnesses were not permanently insane they could and must have known whether they had really seen Jesus twenty-three years before or not.

In the pages to follow we shall bring forward our strongest reasons against the hallucination hypothesis. But meantime we may call attention to three further facts in this connection which prove the hallucination hypothesis to be untenable :—

(a) The hypothesis of hallucination is a baseless assumption. Our opponents can never prove it, if only for the reason that according to *their own view* the reports of the Evangelists respecting their visions are too scanty and uncertain. From the standpoint of the adversary these reports would not suffice to establish a diagnosis of lunacy 2,000 years later.

(b) Probably the Apostles possessed enough of practice and experience to distinguish between a *visionary* state of mind and the appearance of *real, objective* things.

We can demonstrate this from the letters of *Paul* which are recognised as genuine.

*Paul* writes in 2 Cor. xii. 1-4 : “ I will come to *visions* and *revelations* of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ, above *fourteen* years ago (A.D. 39 that would be) (whether in the body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard *unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*”

The brunt of all assaults upon the reality of the Resurrection is generally directed against its principal witness, the Apostle Paul. Now we can prove from the above-quoted passage that Paul within at least *nine* years after the Resurrection possessed a clear judgment concerning his *visionary* trances. He distinguished in the foregoing passage at that time clearly between his *frequent visions* and the *single, objective* appearance of the Risen One. He drew, too, in his public utterances an essential distinction between the two ; he considered it his duty to be silent as to the contents of his *visions* (2 Cor. xii. 4), while he placed the unique fact of *the Resurrection* in the *centre of his preaching* (Romans x. 9 ; 1 Cor. xv. 3-11).

It is, therefore, not likely that a man of such a self-analysing consciousness, should have been the dupe of deception in regard to the Appearances of the Risen Christ.<sup>1</sup>

We have already seen that the hallucination hypothesis can only serve at best as an explanation of the *abiding* conviction of the first disciples, if at the same time it is supposed that the hallucinations relating to the Risen Christ *repeated themselves for many years*.

It is, however, demonstrable that the appearances of the Risen Christ *ceased* suddenly and for ever with the conversion of St. Paul, that is to say, after a *short* time. Paul writes (1 Cor. xv. 8): "And **last** of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

The hallucination hypothesis is hereby proved to be untenable and useless. At best, it only explains how the disciples at the very beginning, say till the time of Paul's conversion, could have believed in the Resurrection. But it fails to explain the point at issue, namely, how *twenty-three years afterwards, when, as can be proved, the hallucinations had long ceased*, the disciples still stood fast in full conviction to this belief.

(e) Again the Apostles were cognisant of the *practical* and *moral* bearing of their affirmation.

Paul confesses, 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15, in the name of his fellow Apostles: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and

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<sup>1</sup> We distinguish, moreover, between *visions* and *hallucinations*. *Visions* arise from contact between the human soul and God. *Hallucinations* are delusions of the mind, which form themselves spontaneously in a brain excited by *disease*.

There are *various* other reports of visions in the lives of the Apostles. Peter sees (Acts x. 10-16) in a vision a *sheet* descend from heaven, filled with unclean beasts. But he does not conclude that the sheet *really* existed. Paul sees (Acts xvi. 9) a man of Macedonia, who prays him for help. But he well knows that this figure was but a vision. "The more the Apostles experienced the phenomena of visions, the more must they have been able to distinguish apparitions seen *in vision* from *outward reality*" (cf. Acts xii. 6-11; Note especially verses 9 and 11).



we (Apostles) are found **false witnesses of God** ; because we have *testified* of God that he raised up Christ ; whom he raised not up." According to this statement, the Apostles admitted no possibility of their having been *themselves deceived*. If Christ did not *really* rise, the Apostles were, **according to their own judgment** of themselves, *teachers of error* from the standpoint of fact, and from the standpoint of morality, *deceivers*.

As a matter of fact, they only needed to have opened the grave in which (whether thirty-six hours or years before) they had laid the corpse of Jesus, in order to be convinced of their delusion. Had they not done this, they would have been carelessly and without scrutiny trumpeting abroad to the world a contention, the import of which they were completely aware of ; and, morally, they would have been inexcusable.

(f) Visionaries and bungling tacticians of this type do not become world reformers of the first quality. They may produce some sort of frenzy or intoxication for a time, but cannot permanently convey, as did the Apostles, new life and power to a dying and degenerate world.

VI. *The belief in the Resurrection of Jesus had no affinity either with the thought or with the temper of the Apostles at that time.*

(a) Firstly, it had no affinity with their *cast of mind*.

The Apostles had grown up under Pharisaic doctrine, which taught a *general* resurrection of all the dead at the coming of the Messiah. But the Resurrection of a single individual *from among* the dead, in the meantime, was an idea foreign to it (*cf.* John xi. 23-25 ; Mark ix. 10). When Moses and Elijah appeared to the disciples on the mountain (Matthew xvii. 1-9), it entered into the mind of none of them that they might be risen from the dead. It was only a "vision" (Matthew xvii. 9). They had, therefore, no expectation of the Resurrection of Jesus (Luke xxiv. 25-27). They did not even think of it as a *possibility* ; otherwise the women would not have gone on the *Easter morning* to his grave to embalm his body (Mark xvi. 1-2). More than this, they all met the first tidings of the accomplished Resurrection with suspicion,

one even with resolute scepticism (John xx. 24, 25). They looked upon it at first as "a fable" (Luke xxiv. 11).

(b) The belief in the Resurrection of Jesus had just as little affinity with the existing *temper* of the disciples.

We can best form an impression of what their state of mind shortly *before* and shortly *after* the crucifixion was, by scrutinising *Peter*, the most pronounced personality of the group. Shortly *before* the crucifixion Peter was an entirely different man from what he was shortly afterwards. *Before*, Peter was so timid and faint-hearted that he took fright at a servant maid and denied his Master with perjury (Luke xxii. 55-60). Shortly *after* the Resurrection of Jesus we find the same Peter full of ardent joy and triumphant energy. Before his Master's murderers he lion-heartedly confesses Jesus as his Lord and Messiah (Acts ii. 14-36).

How is this sudden change, which resulted in the greatest Revolution in religious history, to be explained from the historical and psychological point of view? The *death* of Jesus furnishes no explanation. It could only intensify the dejection of the Apostolic circle into hopeless despair. Just as little could mere *self-reflection* have conjured up this sudden revulsion of mood and character. *According to all psychological laws, something from without must have entered into the life of the primitive community, something which adequately explains this striking and eventful transformation.*

He who *admits* the Resurrection of Jesus encounters no further difficulties, psychological or historical. But he who *denies* it stands at the decisive turning point of history, face to face with an *insoluble* riddle.

Finally, our principal witness, the Apostle *Paul*, had not the least inclination to the Gospel until, by a sudden appearance of Jesus, he was made his disciple. He was an ardent devotee of Rabbinism, to the world-wide mission of which he subscribed with all the warmth of his Oriental nature. Jesus and his Gospel stood in diametrical opposition to his Jewish modes of thought, at once bigotedly exclusive and Pharisaically legal. He was the personification of the abhorrence of the Resur-

rection of Jesus felt by the Judaism of his age. According to his own confession (Gal. i. 13-17), it was just on his way to Damascus to persecute the disciples of the Risen One that he was forcibly thrown off the axis of his former thoughts and desires by an appearance of Jesus.

*Had it been possible*, he would have dismissed this appearance of Jesus as a temptation of Satan, with all the power of that iron will of his. Everything in him must have risen up against it. He knew that his former friends would never acknowledge its reality. (2) It cost him a pitiful, public retractation, the enmity of his beloved nation, a life of privation and homelessness, and finally an excruciating death as a martyr. Paul was far-seeing enough to view at a glance all these consequences. If, notwithstanding, he recognised the reality of this appearance of Jesus, there can be but *one* explanation; it must have been so patent to his senses, so palpable, so perspicuous, that he had no evasion left him. Saul, *the Pharisee*, was smitten down by it, as by a lightning stroke, on the open highroad. (3)

What we maintain, in sum, is this: The victim of hysterical hallucination generally sees only that which he expects, fears, or loves. His morbid visions are spectramirages, the projections of his morbidly excited system. But the Apostles witnessed appearances of Jesus which lay completely outside the horizon of their creed, their state of mind, or their expectation. They accepted them at first with suspicion. Here lies the fundamental difference between the two kinds of appearances.

VII. *The Resurrection of Jesus took place under such circumstances that there could not have failed to be discovery in the event of its falsity.*

The trial of Jesus was the most thrilling in the history of Israel. A whole people participated in it, in the heat of a passionate agitation. With the execution of the accused it appeared to have been brought to a close for ever. Suddenly the Apostles came **publicly** forward with their avowal of the Resurrection of Jesus. This political move of the Messianic party jeopardised once more the



victory which the Government had just achieved. It evoked a new and passionate agitation among the whole people. It was a solemn and public impeachment of the leading men of Israel, which, in the gravity of its purport, outweighed all the accusations which Jesus had made against Rabbinism during his lifetime. It indirectly taxed the highest tribunal of Israel with a crime, the awfulness of which is incalculable to a Jewish mind : **the murder of the Messiah.** The Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, had the deepest interest in defending themselves publicly against this incrimination of the Messianic party ; it obliged them to prove that the Apostles were either impostors or insane.

*This proof could have been easily furnished if Jesus had not really risen again.*

Consider how favourable were the conditions for them. The Apostles maintained that Jesus had risen from the dead *immediately* after his crucifixion and *in the same place* where it was carried out. Such a contention, had it been made, say in Corinth, five years after would have been more difficult to investigate. But Paul relates, in 1 Cor. xv. 4, expressly that Jesus rose again from the dead on the **third** day after his crucifixion. All that the Pharisees had to do, therefore, was to bear the corpse of Jesus in solemn procession through the streets of Jerusalem or to exhibit it publicly at Golgotha. The trickery of the Apostolic declaration that Jesus had risen would then have been once for all proved to every plain man. Why did not the Pharisees and Scribes do this ?

*He who denies the Resurrection of Jesus and replaces it by a hypothesis of hallucination must assume, that not only the Apostles and the whole Primitive Church, but the Sanhedrim, as well as all the Pharisees and Scribes of Israel, suddenly lost their senses and that the "Critic" is the only one who has kept his head.*

We ask our opponents, What became of the corpse of Jesus ? The Pharisees said, "The disciples of Jesus stole it" (Matthew xxvii. 62-66, xxviii. 11-15). But in that case the Apostles would have been conscious deceivers. How could they, as such, have proclaimed a religion of

holiness and self-denial and have suffered martyrdom for the sake of this deception ?

And the Pharisees *cannot* have stolen the body of Jesus ; they would have given thousands of pieces of silver if they could have got possession of it at that moment. Only a perfectly disinterested party might, perhaps, unsuspectingly, have removed it, conveying it elsewhither. That is, however, in the first place, most improbable. No Jew, without urgent necessity, would touch a corpse, because it rendered him unclean. But suppose, nevertheless, that someone had, for some unknown reason, carried away the corpse of Jesus ; then that third party must afterwards have learnt the unique ecclesiastical importance of his act. For forty years after the Resurrection all Israel was disturbed by the question. It divided Judaism into two contending camps. The man needed only to say a word and to produce the body of Jesus, and he could have earned a fortune. He had no reason for silence. On the contrary, he had every inducement to speak. And had the authorities accidentally got an inkling of his deed at a subsequent date, after he had hushed it up, he would have incurred the worst suspicions. Even this way of escape for our opponents is but a counsel of desperation.

More unhappy still is, lastly, the contention that Jesus was not really dead when he was taken down from the cross, but that he suddenly awoke in his grave from a state of coma, and the disciples believed that he had risen from the dead. For in the first place it is most unlikely that the embittered foes of Jesus would permit him to be taken from the cross while living. But let us grant that after being taken down from the cross Jesus did really awake from a deep swoon. Then imagine what his physical plight must have been. His forehead was pierced by the pricks of the crown of thorns ; both hands and feet were bleeding from wounds, on which the weight of his body had hung for many hours ; his side was stabbed by the thrust of a lance ; the flesh hung in shreds from his back after the frightful scourging. Had his recovery been possible, he would have stood in need of long and assiduous

nursing. How could this helpless cripple, this wretched invalid, have given the disciples at that very time the impression of a *victor* over death and grave? The disciples themselves would never have dreamt of such a thing, however stupid and illogical they might be. And, in the upshot, what became of Jesus?

If, on the contrary, Jesus really rose from the dead, then all is psychologically transparent to the accurate historian. Otherwise, it is inexplicable where the corpse of Jesus, or Jesus himself, remained.

VIII. *The falsity of the witness of the Apostles to the Resurrection of Jesus would be a greater miracle than its truth.*

If the Resurrection of Jesus was the imagination of the first disciples, then the illusion itself was a miracle.

(a) A miracle, in the first instance, as regards its *origin*. The Resurrection of Jesus was an *easily ascertainable phenomenon*. When besides in all history have 514 men, of the stamp and moral discrimination of the Apostles, repeatedly and independently of one another, been the victims of so gross a deception? When besides have two leaders of great, vehemently antagonistic historical tendencies, like Paul and Peter, coincided in the same hallucination?

Of course, there are cases in which hysterical visionaries, inwardly in sympathy with one another, mutually suggest their illusions. But it is just this presumption of inward sympathy which is out of place here. You can for a time goad an unthinking crowd into fanaticism. But a disease of that kind advances by rapid stages. New and dissimilar illusions soon supplant in the minds of the fanatical leaders the first general substructure. Such crazy fanatics soon fall out among themselves. Ultimately they stand revealed as madmen, even to the masses, who at first gaped in astonishment at the novel sight.

Where besides could 514 witnesses, in other respects of great variety of individuality, be found, who, after twenty-three years, should *resolutely* and *unanimously* testify to an event which rested solely on a crude self-deception?



And that under the steadily growing opposition of an environment no less sceptical than it was malevolent. It should not be forgotten, either, that serious personal frictions occurred even among the Apostles (Gal. ii. 11-14). And grave party differences to some extent sundered, in all probability, the other witnesses. Now, under these conditions, could the self-delusion of such a motley, heterogeneous crowd of witnesses be maintained for twenty-three years? Would not at least the more intelligent have recovered their understandings within this long period? Would no cleavage have arisen among this host of witnesses?

If the Resurrection of Jesus were imagination, then this persistent, obstinate imagination is a thing without parallel in history. It was itself, in fact, a miracle.

(b) The deception was furthermore a miracle in respect of its historical *effects*. A *crucified* Messiah was as much a contradiction in terms to the Jew as a square circle to the mathematician. It was only the extraordinary "imagination" of the Apostles that they had seen the dead Jesus in bodily form after his crucifixion, and, moreover, received from him fundamental instructions that emboldened them to proclaim *an executed criminal* to the world as the Son of God. But for this "self-delusion" the Gospel would have been buried with Jesus; it would never have become the greatest spiritual factor in the world's history. (4) Consequently, the whole historical success of the Gospel is in the last resort based upon that "deception." In what does that success consist? Jesus now reigns over a spiritual *kingdom* which, nominally at least, embraces *one-third* of the inhabitants of the globe. His Gospel is about to gain possession of the remaining two-thirds of mankind. It has in every century "set more pens in motion for or against it, supplied more themes for sermons, addresses, treatises, learned books, works of art, and hymns of praise than the whole of the great men, ancient and modern, in the aggregate." It has governed the course of the religious and civilised history of the world for the last two thousand years. It has impregnated even its most

bitter opponents with more of its spirit than they are willing to admit. Neither Hamlet, nor Faust nor Zarathustra would have been historically conceivable without the Gospel. In every age it was recognised but by few, and more seldom still was it clearly proclaimed. But where it was preached in sincerity, it has infused new life, peace, moral advancement and educational progress into the mildewed morality of mankind. In all ages and tongues thousands, often after life-long misconceptions, have acknowledged that they have, in it, discovered the truth.

This unique and ever augmenting success of the Gospel depends ultimately on the *Resurrection* of Jesus.

However we may judge about this, one thing is at any rate undeniable : if it were a deception of the Apostles, then our opponents would represent the *Truth*, and we disciples of Jesus—rightly considered—*error*.

Press this possibility to its logical conclusion : it would be *error* that for millenniums had engendered new life, peace, moral impulse and progress of civilisation. *Truth*, on the contrary, would have, throughout all this time, only brought about religious corruption, pessimism, moral degeneration, and decay of civilisation. And yet this “truth” has never yet had a chance of displaying its proper fruits. Even the most radical of modern unbelief lives yet on the moral activities of the Gospel, which theoretically it denies. Unbelief is still too much of an intruder to be consistently translated into practice. But the philosophic pessimism of a Schopenhauer, the moral insanity of a Nietzsche, the communistic radicalism of a Bebel, and the passionate sensuality of an Ellen Key, give us some notion of what we have to expect when “truth” shall have finally triumphed over “error.” If the Resurrection of Jesus were a deception of the Apostles, then for nearly two thousand years death has been the offspring of life, and life of death.

*Unbelief achieves therefore nothing except the substitution of this new irrational miracle, a million times repeated, for the single intelligible miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus.*

The freethinker is obliged, moreover, to have recourse

to yet more desperate means in order to defend this desperate position. Firstly, he must declare those great and holy men, the proven benefactors of mankind—the Apostles—to have been half-witted fanatics. He can, however, bring *no proof* of this monstrous assertion. He can do nothing except set his unproved and unprovable affirmations against the steadfast witness of the Apostles.

Further, the unbeliever thus resorts to a method *which, if consistent with itself, annuls the whole science of history*. Once admit the principle that 514 witnesses of the character and discernment of the Apostles could be, repeatedly and in good faith, so grossly deceived about an event so easily determinable as the Resurrection of Jesus, and any sophist will be able in the same way with ease to get rid of any fact of history that he finds inconvenient. The modern Reform-Jew, to whom the judicial murder of the Sanhedrim is repugnant, can with equal right, for example, represent the Crucifixion of Jesus as a fanatical but well meant delusion of the Apostles. *As careful students of history we are compelled to protest against freethought of all shades murdering history by its dogmas.*

Finally, by its denial of the Resurrection of Jesus, unbelief takes from the consistent thinker all the *hope* and *poetry* of life. It degrades the highest moral ideals of humanity to the level of an unreal mental fallacy (1 Cor. xv. 19, 32, 33). Instead of a Divine reality it postulates a hallucination as the motive-power urging forward the spiritual development of the last two thousand years. It thereby decapitates human history. We are not credulous enough to make good infidels!

We say, therefore, to close this section of the subject : **The Gospel demands faith. But freethought exacts of its adherents sheer gullibility.** Even noble characters may sometimes succumb to unbelief, as a *temporary stage of transition*. But as a *final philosophy of life* it can only satisfy the indolent and morally dissolute, who ignore the supreme problem of life.

In our investigation up to this point we have made that small remainder which even the criticism of a Strauss



and a Baur has been obliged to leave intact, our point of departure. Since that school of criticism two generations have passed by. *In the light of historical science the position of the Gospel is much more favourable than seventy years ago.* Modern criticism has openly admitted the precipitancy of the conclusions of the older criticism, and has already sounded the retreat. One of the best living students of primitive Christianity, who is also the leader of the new school of Rationalism, *Adolf Harnack*, feels himself obliged in his frequently quoted book, "The Chronology of Ancient Christian Literature to Eusebius"<sup>1</sup> (I., 1897, p. 7), to make the following avowal : "There was a time—indeed the general public still lives in it<sup>2</sup>—when people thought that the oldest Christian Literature, including the New Testament, ought to be considered as a tissue of deceptions and fabrications. *That time has passed by.* For Science it was an *episode*, in which it has learnt much, and *after which it has much to forget.* The results of the following investigations extend further in 'reactionary' directions than that which may be described as the intermediate standpoint of present-day criticism. *The oldest Literature of the Church is, considered as literary history, in its main outlines and in most of its details, veracious and trustworthy. In the whole of the New Testament there is possibly but one single document which can, in the strict sense of the word, be described as pseudonymous, the second Epistle of Peter.*" On p. 237 of the same book Professor Harnack writes : "A time will come—it is already approaching—in which people will cease to concern themselves about the decipherment of literary and historical problems in the sphere of Primitive Christianity, because that which really signifies will have met with general acceptance—viz., *the essential rights of tradition*, with deductions of little importance."

This scientifically creditable declaration of an eminent scholar is worthy of being proclaimed with silver trumpets to the four winds.

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius.*

<sup>2</sup> The italics are the author's.

We do not need, then, to stint ourselves to the four great Pauline epistles.

Modern Criticism, in contravention of the obsolete Strauss-Baur school, admits once more the substantial authenticity of the sayings of our Lord in the three first Gospels. All that it specifically rejects are the miracles of Jesus, but not because they are less accredited historically than the rest. It rejects them, rather, **on principle**, because from *general philosophic considerations* it holds miracles to be altogether impossible.

In conformity, therefore, with the altered position of modern criticism, we may extend our common basis of argument.

*We now address ourselves to a scrutiny of the historical witness to the miracles of Jesus, which we find in the first three Gospels.*

Modern Criticism says, "The first three Gospels were definitely placed upon record some forty years after the death of Jesus. The recollection of the Primitive Church concerning the life of Jesus had therefore to pass through a considerable period of oral communication before being committed to writing in our Gospels. During this time they ran mythically to seed, were coloured by legend and elevated into the region of the Miraculous. We may, therefore, confidently ascribe the Miraculous in the Gospels to the clouded memory of the primitive community, and may, without damage to the kernel of Jesus' teaching or the portrait of his life, critically discard such elements as fabulous excrescences."

We hold this hypothesis to be false, but from the standpoint of historical science it is no doubt legitimate. Before we enter upon the investigation of the historical and scientific proof of this hypothesis, we would call attention to the following three preliminaries :—

(1) Our opponents attempt to explain Primitive Christianity on purely natural grounds. This is the secret intention which it prosecutes in advancing this hypothesis. Let us suppose that they could with a show of scientific reasoning eliminate the miracles from the first three Gospels. Their attempt to construe Primitive Christianity

in purely natural terms will, nevertheless, be ship-wrecked, *for their hypothesis collapses in view of the Apostolic miracles and the Resurrection of Jesus*. These are handed down to us, according to our opponents' own historical basis, not at third or fourth hand, **but by the miracle-workers and eye-witnesses themselves**. The attempt of our adversaries to discard all the miracles of Primitive Christianity clashes with their own historical premisses. The splendid historical testimony to the Apostolic miracles and the Resurrection of Jesus shatters for ever the position of our opponents. It betokens the historical insolvency of the radical theology. In consequence it cannot any longer *raise any fundamental objection* to the miracles of the first three Gospels.

(2) The first three Gospels also attribute the working of miracles to the Apostles during the lifetime of their Master (*e.g.*, Matt. x. 1-8). The Apostolic miracles, of which we have reliable evidence in the four great Pauline epistles, enable us rightly to gauge the trustworthiness of at least this part of the first three Gospels. And this is of importance, because, of all the miracles of the first three Gospels, it is precisely those of the Apostles which present the most difficulty to faith.

(3) If *only* Jesus, or *only* the Apostles had been able to perform miracles, we should all have been inclined to concede miraculous power more readily to Jesus than to the Apostles. Now, as the Apostolic miracles are proved on the accepted basis of our opponents, the miracles of Jesus are at least probable. This assumption is further confirmed by the fact that, according to the whole spirit of the four great Pauline epistles, the Apostles ascribed their miracles, not to the strength of their own religious life, but to their Risen Master (*cf.* Gal. ii. 20, 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, 2 Cor. iii. 17 [Romans xv. 18, 19]).

We now proceed to examine the value of the hypothesis of our opponents. In the first place we note that we are here dealing with a supposition that may, indeed, be made, but *never can be proved*. We measure it by the standard by which the student measures every hypothesis: *A hypothesis is scientifically justified in so far as it accounts*



*in the simplest manner, and accounts consistently and exhaustively, for given facts.*

The hypothesis that denies the historicity of the miracles of Jesus in the first three Gospels has an exactly contrary effect. It turns simple and psychologically transparent circumstances into an **inexplicable** problem. In lieu of what is psychologically likely, it plunges us into a giddy, inextricable conflict of hypotheses.

We supply the proof of this :—

(1) *The man who denies the miracles of Jesus cannot understand either the deep impression made by his personality upon his people, or the faith of his Apostles in his Messiahship.*

Let us transport ourselves back into the religious conditions of the age of Jesus.

(a) It is historically certain that orthodox Judaism, a short time before the public ministry of Jesus, *stood staunchly to its Bible*. It believed the miracles of Moses and Elijah related in the Jewish Scriptures.

Furthermore, it awaited *the Messiah* promised in those Scriptures. He was conceived of as a supernatural Being, *equipped with Divine powers*, at home in *the world of miracle* (cf. Isaiah ix. 6, John vii. 31). It was believed that he would raise the dead children of Israel (cf. Weber, *Jüdische Theologie*, II., 81), and that by this miracle of omnipotence he would bring the heathen to worship Jehovah. Finally, he was to destroy the old order of nature and re-establish Paradise on earth together with a new order (Isaiah xi. 1-9).

When Paul, who was fully acquainted with his people and their Messianic theology (cf. Romans xi. i., 2 Cor. xi. 22, Gal. i. 14, Phil. iii. 5), wanted to sketch by a few strokes the religious features of the Judaism of the time, he had to say “the **Jews** require a **sign**” (1 Cor. i. 22). *It was in the midst of such a people that Jesus came forward with his Messianic claims, and from which he recruited his Apostles and Disciples.*

Had Jesus done no miracles it is psychologically inexplicable how he, with his Messianic claims, could keep his people for three years in a state, as it were, of breath-

less tension. A *Few* at that time *would* not have given a *moment's* serious attention to a *non-miraculous* Messiah, even if he had preached as an angel from Heaven. The consciousness he possessed of his Messiahship necessarily required the counterpoise of his miracles. Otherwise he would have provoked the ridicule of the Judaism of that age, instead of exercising a profoundly stirring influence. Could the Messiah fall behind a Moses and Elijah in miracle-working? This would have been the logic of the simplest Israelite, and upon that reef the influence of the miracle-less Jesus of "modern" theology would in that age have been foredoomed to suffer shipwreck.

(b) In particular, as regards the *Primitive Apostles*, three things are certain. (1) Both before and after their conversion to Jesus, they were Jews *who believed in the Bible*, who were steeped in the *Jewish Scriptures* from which they drew their proofs. (2) After their conversion they held Jesus to be the Messiah of Israel foretold by Moses and the Prophets. This Messiah, according to their Scriptures, was to do miracles. (3) They lived for three years *day and night* with Jesus. They must therefore have known whether Jesus had done miracles or not.

He who, in common with our opponents, denies the miracles in the life of Jesus, cannot understand from a historical or psychological point of view the origin of the faith of the Primitive Apostles in Jesus as the Messiah.

But if, on the contrary, he admits the miracles of Jesus as found in the first three Gospels to be historical, he has a complete explanation of the Apostolic acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus.

The adverse hypothesis converts therefore even such certain facts as the faith of the Apostles in Jesus into a psychologically insoluble enigma. It effects, that is, the opposite of that which a scientifically justified hypothesis should effect: *instead of elucidating the obscure, it obscures what was lucidly clear.*

(2) "*But,*" continue our opponents, "*the Apostles and the masses were carried away by their enthusiasm for the*

*majestic personality of Jesus. In this state of mind, they were incapable of making a sober and thorough investigation of the Messiahship of Jesus."*

Granted that it was so. The Apostles and the masses could nevertheless soon have lighted on a corrective.

(a) There was *one* at any rate in the Apostolic circle who was an exception to the general infatuation: this was the matter-of-fact, cold, calculating miser, *Judas Iscariot*. He had always regarded Jesus and his work from a purely business standpoint. Later on, when the Gospel struck him as not profitable enough, he forsook Jesus. Had Jesus performed no *real* miracles, this striking defect would not have remained concealed from Judas. At the latest he would have appealed to it after his treachery, to justify "Scripturally" his desertion. He would have taken particular care that the Apostles should have their eyes opened to this hiatus in the work of Jesus.

(b) Then again, the *Pharisees and Scribes* were there to expose the omission. If the masses stood at a white heat of fanaticism, the Pharisees beset Jesus for three whole years with the keen gaze of hate. In them there was a superabundant supply of the coldest criticism against Jesus. They were quite clear that if Jesus conquered, they would lose their influence on the masses. His fall was to them more and more a matter of vital political importance. They feared his teaching and hated his Person. They sought opportunity to unmask him publicly as a madman (*e.g.* Mark xii. 13). They held official councils to devise suitable means to accomplish his downfall (*e.g.* Luke vi. 11).

Had Jesus not *actually* performed the miracles prophesied of the Messiah in the Jewish Scriptures, the Pharisees would at once have paraded this dogmatic flaw. With this they would have had a handle, as convenient as it would have been obvious and well-timed to procure his fall; they only needed, Bible in hand, to point out publicly and emphatically the essential contradiction between the Messiah *of the Bible*, who was to do *miracles* and this *false* Messiah who could do *no*



*miracles.* That would have been wiser than crucifying Jesus. In the former case they would have morally crushed Jesus before the world; in the latter, they have only ruined themselves.

This method of Scripture proof was to them, as scribes, particularly familiar. They were all well schooled in Rabbinic jurisprudence. They were accustomed to clamour against Jesus on other counts. (5) Indeed Jesus openly challenged them to take up this Scripture proof: he appealed before all Israel to the Scriptures, which testified of him and his Messianic office (cf. e.g., Luke iv. 21 [John v. 39, 45-47]).

We ask our opponents: How could thousands of the most learned, acutest and most malevolent men in Israel fail, under these circumstances, and for *three years*, to make use of so handy and deadly a weapon against Jesus? There is only *one* satisfactory answer to this question: Jesus actually did perform the miracles which the Evangelists report. Accept the historicity of the Gospel miracles, and the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees is perfectly comprehensible, historically and psychologically. There is then no problem at all. *But the contrary hypothesis creates an artificial problem. And, moreover, a problem that is insoluble.*

(3) *If Jesus did not actually perform the miracles ascribed to him in the first three Gospels, then their general circulation throughout the Primitive Church and during the life of the Apostles is inexplicable.* (6)

The Apostles watched over their churches with personal love "even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. ii. 7). (7) They warned them of outbreaks of error (e.g., Acts xx. 30, Gal. i. 6, 7, 1 Tim. iv. 7, vi. 20, 21, 2 Tim. iii. 14). We know too their inexorable condemnation of all arbitrary additions to the Gospel. Paul says "But though **we** (Apostles) or an **angel** from heaven preach **any other Gospel** unto you **than that we have preached unto you**, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8). And John says, "**Whosoever goeth beyond and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ**, hath not God. . . . If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine,

receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9, 11). Legendary interpolations could scarcely be condemned more bluntly.

Let us suppose that members of the Primitive Church who had not been eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus, should have tried to invent the miracles of Jesus as in the first three Gospels. The Apostles would certainly have noted this perilous *falsification of history* and been obliged immediately to combat it. For the Apostles knew on the one hand the true facts of the historical life of Jesus, and on the other, the faith of the Church. Had any fanatical or superstitious dislocation of these arisen through false teachers it could not have escaped the Apostles. Paul wrote (Romans xvi. 17) to the Church at Rome: "Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; (of course from us Apostles) and avoid them.*" According to this principle such a heresy would have produced a hot encounter between the Apostles and the leaders of it in the Churches. And in that case traces of this conflict would be bound to appear in the Epistles. *The complete absence of such traces in the Apostolic Epistles shows us that the theory of our opponents is entirely unfounded.*

(4) "*But,*" continue our opponents, "*the heresy of the alleged miracles of Jesus might have taken root in the Churches in spite of the Apostles, and remained concealed.*"

There were, however, *hundreds of eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus* to be found scattered about in the Churches (*cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 6). These not infrequently changed their residence and church fellowships, so that they were pretty generally distributed.

What is more, they were valiant men who hated untruth, and not seldom mounted the scaffold for their fidelity to known truth. A part of them stood *morally* on the same level as the Apostles (*cf.* Phil. iii. 15, 17).

These at least must have noticed such a comprehensive falsification of history, which threatened to alter the substance of the Gospel for all time. For conscience'

sake they would have been obliged to declare themselves openly against this newly emerging superstition. The historical course of things in such cases is generally as follows : A new movement arises. The original elements partly coalesce with it, partly recal their own tenets and react strongly upon the intruding tendency. A conflict ensues between the two parties, until one finally succumbs and gradually disappears from history. (8)

Had the hypothesis of our opponents corresponded with reality, then *a party of Old Believers would have formed here and there within the Churches, who would have sought to maintain the original traditions of a Jesus without miracles as against the enthusiasts and visionaries.*

We have a sufficient knowledge of the conflicts of Primitive Christianity : in general they related to the law, circumcision, Sabbath and food regulations. In none of the New Testament writings do we find a trace of such a conflict concerning the miracles in the life of Jesus.

*The hypothesis of our opponents therefore contradicts the facts as well as the analogy of history.*

But our adversaries are determined to push this contradiction to its extreme.

(5) "*The Primitive Community, including the Apostles and immediate disciples of Jesus, were, as it were, stupefied by a superstitious craze for miracles in the life of Jesus.*"

But there were others also watching the Churches. Had the protest not come from within, it would most certainly have occurred from *without*.

(a) This "miracle myth" was fixed *at the latest* by 70 A.D., for our opponents date the formation of the Gospel of Mark at latest in this year (cf. Harnack, "*The Chronology of Ancient Christian Literature*," p. 717-18).<sup>1</sup> Forty-three years at most remain, for its formation (27-70 A.D.).

We draw attention to one point in this connection ; the Primitive Church, up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., ranked as a *Jewish* sect, which generally won its first adherents from the *synagogue*. (9) The Church threatened during these decades to break up the syna-

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius.*



gogue. And the synagogue on its side made every effort to defend itself. Historically considered, the life of Jesus was only the prelude to, and the crucifixion of Jesus only the opening of, this forty years war between the synagogue and the Primitive Church. The Church during these forty years occupied a strange, hybrid position. On the one side, it was *closely* attached to the synagogue. It acknowledged the Jewish Bible as its Scriptural canon; the whole of its leaders and the greater part of its members were *Jews* and former members of the synagogue. On the other side it was in many cases bitterly persecuted by the synagogues. The leaders of the synagogues, the Pharisees and Scribes, must therefore, during these forty years in which the alleged "miracle-myth" developed, have been fully informed as to all the occurrences within the bosom of the Primitive Church.

*During these four decades, the question of the Messiahship of Jesus was the central point of the controversy.* And this was proved on the part of the Christians by the miracles of Jesus. **The miracles of Jesus were therefore during these years the principal weapon of the Primitive Christian Apologetes as against the synagogue** (*cf.* Acts ii. 22, 24; x. 36-38; John xx. 30, 31). **The champions of the Pharisees had, therefore, the greatest interest in showing the miracles of Jesus to be a product of superstition, and of the fanaticism of the early Church.** We ask our opponents: Why did not the Pharisees and Scribes at once stigmatise the new fanaticism of early Christian doctrine touching the person of Jesus?

It is a universally accepted principle of law, that a fact ranks as proved if that party which is interested in its denial, admits its reality. If this principle is just, then the reality of the miracles of Jesus is historically proved, for **even the Pharisees and Scribes candidly admitted them.**

We now present the *proof* of this contention. We cite first the *Gospels* and then the *Talmud*. (10)

According to the Gospels the Pharisees made only one attempt to brand a miracle of Jesus as a mere piece of legerdemain (*cf.* John ix. 13-34). This attempt utterly failed. Beyond this they never ventured to call in ques-

tion the reality of his miracles (*cf.* Matthew ix. 34 ; xii. 24 [John iii. 2 ; xi. 47]). All they did was to try and find another explanation of them ; alleging that Jesus could not have wrought them in the power of *God*, but must have done so in the power of *Satan*.

Here our opponents may object that "*The Gospels are written by Christians.*"

To this we reply : The organ of Pharisaic orthodoxy, *the Talmud*, gives almost the same story as the Gospels. "*Jesus accomplished his miracles by means of witchcraft which he had brought with him from Egypt*" (*cf.* Laible, *Jesus Christus im Talmud*, pp. 44-48). On this, Laible appropriately remarks (p. 47), "The addition '*from Egypt*,' gives expression to the thought that Jesus was versed to an *extraordinary degree* in witchcraft. Of Egypt, that land of enchantments, in which the miracles of Moses could be mimicked, we read in Kiddushim, 49 b, 'Ten measures of witchcraft came down upon the earth. Nine portions have fallen to Egypt, and to the whole of the rest of the world, one.' The distinction made in the passage between *Egyptian* (*i.e.*, superlative) and *non-Egyptian* (*i.e.*, ordinary) witchcraft, must be borne in mind, in order to comprehend why the Talmud represents Jesus as having learnt his witchcraft *in Egypt*, though *non-Egyptian* witchcraft was by no means uncommon (*cf.* with latter, *e.g.*, Acts xix. 19)." The contention, therefore, that Jesus had learnt His witchcraft, not from *native* magicians, but *in Egypt*, implies that he was an **arch-magician**. (11)

The miracles of Jesus must have been so obvious as to confound even the Pharisees. They must have been so palpable that they paralysed and rendered hopeless every evasion or sinister construction. Otherwise, the Pharisees would certainly have thrust them indifferently aside as imagination or fraud. But Jesus wrought his miracles in the broadest daylight of publicity, during three years, day by day, in almost every village of Israel. Hundreds of cases of healing, perhaps some cases of those awakened from the dead, moved about among the people as living witnesses for many years after the

Crucifixion of Jesus. The ancient Christian Apologete Quadratus knew some of them in the beginning of the second century, who survived even then.

The fact that even his sharp-eyed enemies never ventured to deny the reality of the miracles of Jesus can only be explained in one of two ways: either Jesus actually did the miracles; or the whole of his enemies—lost their reason. Whoever adopts the latter alternative shows by so doing how greatly his historical judgment may be obscured by his *metaphysical* antipathy to miracles.

(b) There were again other eyes fixed upon the Churches, the eyes of those who would have at once publicly stigmatised any such falsification of history as the theory which we contest.

The primitive Communities were all surrounded by an invisible circle of *renegades* who were either excluded on account of open sin (Matthew xviii. 15-17, 1 Cor. v. 2-5, 11. Cor. xiii., 10, 1 Tim. i. 20), or else had fallen away under the stress of persecution or from love of sin (1 Tim. v., 12, 2 Tim. iv., 10).

These were well acquainted with the internal condition of the Churches. They would soon have noticed such a distortion of the original story of Jesus. Such traitors generally feel the need, also, of presenting to the world a moral justification for their change of party. With this object they eagerly incriminate, in their rancour, the circles they have abandoned, and represent their step to have been a moral duty. Had the hypothesis of our opponents been a true one, these renegades would soon have announced that they had felt themselves obliged to withdraw because of a widespread and frantic heresy in the Community relative to the life of Jesus.

We demand of our foes the proof of any such protest of the Apostates against the miracles of Jesus. *As long as they do not adduce it, we can only designate their statements as scientific trifling.*

(6) *Even then the Primitive Church could only have distorted the life story of Jesus to such an extent had they possessed a feverish activity of imagination.*



But the literature composed within that Church which has come down to us gives us exactly the contrary impression. Our Gospels are strikingly free from rhetorical or poetic sentimentalism. An austere, impartial, we might almost say *indifferent*, matter-of-fact spirit pervades them. (12) Their *style* is the dry, laconic style of a Chronicler. Behind the colossal marble figure of Jesus, the personality of the reporter is completely eclipsed. The Evangelists have not once dared to lavish a word of admiration or praise upon their Master. Men of an exuberant Oriental imagination, such as is presupposed by the contrary hypothesis, write far otherwise than this.

We have now to deliver our *final judgment* from the standpoint of historical science, and it is as follows.

The denial of the miracles of Jesus is not only superfluous, but also bewildering. It does not make the inexplicable explicable, on the contrary, it makes the explicable inexplicable. It contradicts authenticated historical facts. On all sides it stumbles on insuperable difficulties. He who adopts the theory of our opponents thereby resigns any pretension to the historical comprehension of Primitive Christianity. *For it presents in every respect the antithesis of all that a scientifically justified theory should present.*

The dispassionate student of history must therefore reject it, *purely on the fundamental principles of his science.* He ought himself rather to postulate the reality of the miracles of Jesus, however inadequately they might be accredited by history.

And even were it possible to expurgate the miracles of Jesus from the first three Gospels on critical or historical grounds, the Apostolic miracles and the Resurrection of Jesus still remain like an irremovable bedrock in the quagmire of tradition. "Criticism" cannot impugn their splendid historical testimony. If the Apostolic Gospel is substantiated by *but one single historically confirmed miracle*, the position of our adversaries is finally and fundamentally refuted. Then Apostolic Christianity is not of "purely naturalistic" origin.

And a few miracles more or less do not affect the issue.

The man therefore who refuses nevertheless to accept the miracles of Primitive Christianity, does in no case reject them for *historical* considerations.

The allegation of the adverse party is thus disposed of.

And yet the real battle is *but beginning*. The decisive conflict cannot be fought on the territory of *history*, but must be waged on the field of *philosophy*. The miracles of Primitive Christianity have yet to justify themselves before the forum of "modern thought."

Here we come face to face with the theme of our third argument.

## APPENDIX.

(1) Page 19. Whatever opinion is held as to the miracles of Jesus, the reality of the **Apostolic miracles** stands beyond all attacks of historical criticism. Herein is seen the marvellous wisdom of God. Let us consider it for a moment.

Jesus has left us no written documents. *We know him only through the Apostles.* Jesus was the Mediator between God and the Apostles. **But the Apostles are the historical mediators between Jesus and the rest of mankind.**

Thus judged Jesus and the Apostles, thus judges still every modern student of the historical situation.

*John* says, therefore, in 1 John i. 3, with perfect accuracy, "That which **we** (Apostles) have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with **us** (Apostles). And truly, our fellowship is *with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*"

The Apostles, therefore, took the people first into **their** fellowship and brought them through **their** intermediacy into union with Jesus and God.

The abiding in the teaching of the **Apostles** was (according to Acts ii. 42) recognised but a few weeks after the Master's death as the mark of genuine Christianity. In point of fact, we all believe—however paradoxical it may sound to historically perverted ears—on the Christ, not on the basis of Jesus' word, but on that of his **Apostles**. *Only* he who believes his **Apostles** can, in truth, believe on *Jesus*.

The same *John* says, therefore (1 John iv. 6), quite consistently, "**We** (Apostles) are of God. He that knoweth **God** heareth **us** (the Apostles): he that is not of **God** heareth not **us**. Hereby (that is to say, by his hearing or refusing to hear the Apostles) know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."



His attitude to the teachings of the *Apostles* was to early Christianity the touchstone of the Divine valuation of every individual. *As he stood with regard to the Apostles, so he stood to God.* "Here you build up a new hierarchy," says our opponent. "Certainly," we reply, "we are just as far Catholic and hierarchic as *Jesus* was. We have no desire to progress beyond him."

Jesus himself says (Luke x. 16) the same as John, "He that heareth **you** (Apostles) heareth **me**; and he that rejecteth **you** rejecteth **me**; and he that rejecteth **me** rejecteth him that sent me."

With Jesus and his Apostles there is only *one way* to God. This road, mounting from below, runs thus: the *Apostles, Jesus, God*. You must either recognise *all three* or none of them. He who has the **Apostles** has Jesus, and he who has Jesus has God. He who has not the **Apostles** cannot have either Jesus or God. That is *Apostolic Christianity*, that is to say, the *only Christianity* which has any title to exist.

"Modern" theology, on the contrary, confessedly views its characteristic form and fancied advance as consisting in the direct denial of Apostolic theology. We Christians of the Apostolic pattern know, therefore, that it has the spirit of error.

It maintains that Jesus had a different conception of God, a different religion and a different theology than that which the Apostles had or preached. It has raised therefore the watchword, "*Either Jesus, or the Apostles.*" Its affirmations only reveal its lack of a historical and psychological comprehension of Primitive Christianity. The proper way of stating the question is rather—either the Apostles **and** Jesus; or **neither** the Apostles **nor** Jesus.

The Apostles knew themselves to be the Divinely accredited, historical intermediaries and confidential messengers between Jesus and humanity. If they have delivered an over-coloured portrait of Jesus to us, then the true Jesus is for ever lost to the world.

In no case can we get *beyond* or *behind* the Apostles to arrive at an objective historical scrutiny of the propriety

of their judgment, observation and conception of the person and the life of Jesus. We are not, therefore, in a position to determine whether their picture of the Christ accords with the Jesus of history.

On this account the **Apostles** required to have their Divine Mission accredited to us by *miracles*. The Apostles needed the miracles of Jesus to be able to believe on Jesus. **We need the Apostolic miracles in order to be able to believe the Apostles.**

It sounds strange, but it is true: **For us the Apostolic miracles are of far more importance than the miracles of Jesus.** It is these that give historical assurance of the reality of the others. **The Apostolic miracles give us a guarantee, as against the errors of all ages, for the actual veracity of the Apostles, and thus for the genuineness of the picture of the Christ that they have delivered to us.**

God therefore, in his wise prevision, took care that the historicity of the Apostolic miracles should never be shaken by "criticism," even in the darkest hours of the Gospel. The student most infected by doubt has to admit that their historicity is well attested. And whoever admits that, being also able to think logically, consistently and uprightly, must concede the reality of the revelation, and ultimately the truth of the whole Bible.

Orthodoxy judges pedantically and unhistorically in laying all the stress upon *Jesus*, instead of making the *Apostles* its starting point. Thus it has lost the Apostolic centre of gravity. It has been obliged therefore to give way before the new rationalism, armed as the latter is with the weapons of modern science.

The new theology of the future will be obliged to learn again to think, Apostolically, historically, realistically. It will make the Apostolic theology the granite basis of its reasonings. It is then scientifically impregnable.

(2) Page 35. Possibly they looked upon his experience at Damascus, as did Festus later (Acts xxvi. 23, 24), and our modern "theologians" to-day, as a fit of temporary insanity.

(3) Page 35. "Modern" theology assumes that a secret affinity for the Gospel had sprung up in the soul of the Apostle, even before his conversion. He had subdued it

by force. Finally, in the course of Paul's growing tension of spirit, it broke out in a hysterical apparition of Jesus.

But this representation is a psychological romance without any historical basis. *It contradicts the essence, and the characteristic traits of the Pauline theology.* The latter is characterised by such expressions as the following: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Romans ix. 16). "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth" (Romans ix. 18; cf. ix. 10-13, 19-25). Paul emphasises in a very special way the *sovereignty* of God. This prominent peculiarity of his theology has its roots psychologically in his Damascus experience. Paul knew that before his conversion there had not been a spark of inclination towards the Gospel within him. The Gospel had no sort of psychological hold upon him until the Almighty working of Jesus prostrated him outside Damascus. The psychologist reads the Damascus episode between the lines in such passages of the Pauline epistles.

(4) Page 39. The atheist, David Friedrich Strauss, says in his "Old and New Faiths,"<sup>1</sup> 16th edition, p. 19: "When Jesus, as a condemned criminal, had come to his end upon the cross, his whole career lay on the souls of these disciples. If, through his violent death under the ruins of his enterprise they had let themselves be shaken in their belief that he was the Messiah, that would have ended his work, though the remembrance of him and of many of his pregnant words might perhaps have remained for a time among the Jewish people. But the after effects would soon have disappeared, like the rings on the surface of a pool when a stone has been thrown into it." Strauss then shows how that it was only the "imagined" Resurrection of Jesus, that permitted the Gospel to become a great factor in history.

And Ferdinand Christian Bauer, the greatest of rationalistic critics, says, "Only the miracle of the Resurrection could disperse the doubts which seemed as if they must

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<sup>1</sup> *Alten und Neuen Glauben.*



expel faith itself into the endless night of death" (*cf.* Christianity and the Church of the first three centuries," ii., p. 39).<sup>1</sup>

(5) Page 48. The Pharisees called attention (*e.g.*, John vii. 41, 42) to the [apparent] contradiction that Jesus came from Galilee, while the Bible Messiah was to come from Judæa.

(6) Page 48. The "critics" (*e.g.*, Harnack) hold that the *oldest* of the Gospels according to their view, *the Gospel of Mark*, was drawn up in 65-70 A.D., therefore, **immediately after the death of Paul and Peter**. It is remarkable, however, that it is precisely this Gospel which supplies the *most* stories of miracles. It could only have been written and generally accepted as an expression of the faith of the community at that time, if the "miracle legends" of the life of Jesus had already generally permeated the churches. Consequently these "miracle legends" must have arisen in the bosom of the churches some time before the composition of the Gospel of Mark, and thus during the lifetime of the Apostles.

(7) Page 48. We know that Paul, for instance, was well informed regarding the spiritual condition of his churches and their members. He himself writes in 2 Cor. xi. 28, 29: "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended and I burn not?" (*cf.* herewith "the house of Chloe," 1 Cor. i. 11, and the many greetings of the Apostle at the end of his epistles. Those greetings assume an intimate personal acquaintance between the greeter and the greeted).

(8) Page 50. So, *e.g.*, the Church in the second and third generations of its existence waged a battle for life and death against the fanatical errors of the Gnostics. And contrariwise at a later date, Primitive Christianity reacted similarly, in Marcionism, Montanism and Donatism, against the incipient Catholic development of a church now becoming worldly.

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<sup>1</sup> *Das Christenthum und die Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte.*

(9) Page 50. The Apostles (*cf.* Romans i. 16) in their proclamation of the Messiah, always made it *a principle* to go in the first instance to the synagogue of the place they were visiting (*cf.* Acts ix. 20, xi. 19, xiii. 5, xiv. 1, xvii. 1, 2, 17, &c.). Their message generally soon led to a schism in the synagogue. A number of synagogue members believed as a rule in the Apostolic declarations; the others rose up against them. The official synagogue, therefore, looked upon the Apostles and the primitive churches as a pernicious Jewish sect, poaching in their preserves (*cf.* Acts xxiv. 5 and 14, xxviii. 22).

(10) Page 51. In their estimate of the person of Jesus, one can hardly imagine two books more different than these two. *The Gospels* honour Jesus as God. *The Talmud* execrates him as the son of an adulteress, an idolator, a fool and a seducer, who came to his end in hell.

The Talmud is the continuation of the fast petrifying Pharisaic theology. In it there reverberates, like the confused echo of history, Rabbinism's cry of rage, as it was smitten to its heart by Jesus.

(11) Page 52. The recognition of the reality of the miracles of Jesus caused the Pharisees, of course, the greatest embarrassment. Nothing more remained to them than either conversion to Jesus, or a policy of despair. They chose the latter. They tried at least to take from the miracles of Jesus the character of *Divine* tokens. By this means they hoped to weaken the strong influence of the miracles upon the masses, who had been startled by them. They therefore hit upon the explanation which both the Gospels and the Talmud report: that Jesus was an arch-magician of the stamp of those Egyptian magicians who with their Satanic wonders withstood Moses at the Court of Pharaoh (Exodus vii. 11, 12). This subterfuge was under the circumstances by no means maladroit; it was "Biblical," and it tacitly placed the Pharisees on the side of the great religious authority of the Jews, on the side of Moses (*cf.* Matthew xxiii. 2), against a Satanic deluder of the masses. But in the face of the purity and holiness of the person of Jesus, their explanation must be called one of desperation.

(12) Page 54. This spirit of actuality in the Gospels is indeed surprising. To give only *one* example out of many : how would a *modern* narrator in the place of the Evangelists have depicted the *crucifixion* of Jesus ? He would have summoned all his descriptive skill in order to bring home to the readers the portentous significance and horror of this heart-shattering outrage. His pen would quiver with passion and his voice choke with tears. He would declaim on the historical, religious and doctrinal importance of this overwhelming moment. Does Mark do this ?

As if the matter really did not affect him in the least, he writes nothing more than, "*And they crucified him.*" That is amazingly matter-of-fact.



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